

## Identity, capitalism, and critical librarianship

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Attempts to clearly demarcate the locus and nature of ascriptive identity-based critiques (AIC), what is often pejoratively referred to both in the left and the right as 'identity politics', has embroiled socialist theory and practice since at least the 60s, but has recently resurfaced in the face of neoliberal attempts to hijack AIC for its own inegalitarian ends. Recently, Marie Moran and Assad Haider have attempted to critique the concept of AIC, not to reject it, but rather to bolster it in order to fend off potential neoliberal conceptual expropriation. By and large, this discussion of AIC as a potential neoliberal tool has been largely neglected within critical librarianship theory (CL). This not to insinuate that CL ignores this matter in practice nor that its focus on ascriptive identity categories is problematic in and of itself. Rather, I see the project of further articulating the identity within AIC as having the potential to reinvigorate the political power of CL within a revolutionary, and not merely reformist, framework that spills beyond institutional borders.

This presentation will first outline the rise of the concept of identity in relation to capitalism, drawing from both Moran and Haider's exploration of the relation between capitalism, consumer identity, and social identity. I will focus primarily on Moran's "cultural materialist approach," inspired by Raymond Williams, the marxist cultural theorist. From here, I will relate this analysis to how identity is deployed within CL literature and briefly provide a minor course correction, making a case for the formation of a revolutionary meta-theory for CL. Specifically, I will suggest that AIC with CL must explicitly orient itself in a manner that stymies the possibility of such critiques being commandeered by neoliberal interests. Following this, I will suggest some possible strategies for a revolutionary politics of CL, such as promoting the decommodification of education and a move to a political movement that is more clearly structured. Such a move would also be designed to avoid class reductionist approaches by leveraging AIC to highlight specific injustices. For example, within the context of MLIS programs a call for the decommodification of education could be made to, among other things, address the lack of marginalized peoples in the library profession.